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Nine Theses on Social Movements

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The 'new social movements' today are what most mobilise people in pursuit of common concerns. Far more than 'classical' class movements, the social movements motivate and mobilise hundreds of millions of people in all parts of the world—mostly outside established political and social institutions that people find inadequate to serve their needs. This paper discusses the character of these social movements, their strengths and limitations.

THIS essay will develop the following theses:

- (1) The 'new' social movements are not new, even if they have some new features, and the 'classical' ones are relatively new and perhaps temporary;
- (2) Social movements display much variety and changeability, but have in common individual mobilisation through a sense of morality and (in)justice and social power through social mobilisation against deprivation and for survival and identity;
- (3) The strength and importance of social movements is cyclical and related to long political-economic and (perhaps associated) ideological cycles. When the conditions that give rise to the movements change (through the action of the movements themselves and/or more usually due to changing circumstances), the movements tend to disappear.
- (4) It is important to distinguish the class composition of social movements, which are mostly middle class in the west, popular/working class in the south, and some of each in the east;
- (5) There are many different kinds of social movements. The majority seek more autonomy rather than state power, and the latter tend to negate themselves as social movements;
- (6) Although most social movements are more defensive than offensive and tend to be temporary, they are important (today and tomorrow perhaps the most important) agents of social transformation;
- (7) In particular, social movements appear as the agents and re-interpreters of 'delinking' from contemporary capitalism and 'transition to socialism';
- (8) Some social movements are likely to overlap in membership or be more compatible and permit coalition with others, and some are likely to conflict and compete with others. It may be useful to inquire into these relations;
- (9) However, since social movements, like street theatre, write their own scripts—if any—as they go along, any prescription of agendas or strategies, let alone tactics, by outsiders—not to mention intellectuals—is likely to be irrelevant at best and counterproductive at worst.

(1) *The 'New' Social Movements Are Old but Have Some New Features*

The many social movements in the west, south and east that are now commonly

called 'new' are with few exceptions with new forms of social movements which have existed through the ages. Ironically, the 'classical' working class/union movements date mostly only from the last century, and they increasingly appear to be only a passing phenomenon related to the development of industrial capitalism. On the other hand, peasant, localist community, ethnic/nationalist, religious, and even feminist/women's movements have existed for centuries and even millennia in many parts of the world. Yet many of these movements are now commonly called 'new', although European history records countless social movements throughout history. Examples are the Spartacist slave revolts in Rome, the Crusades and countless religious wars, the peasant movements/wars of sixteenth century Germany, historic ethnic and nationalist conflicts throughout the continent, and women's movements that unleashed backlashes of witch-hunts and more recent forms of repression. In Asia, the Arab world and the expansion of Islam, Africa and Latin America, of course, multiple forms of social movements have been the agents of social resistance and transformation throughout history.

Only the ecological/green movement(s) and the peace movement(s) can more legitimately be termed 'new', and that is because they respond to social needs which have been more recently generated by world development. Generalised environmental degradation as a threat to livelihood and welfare is the product of recent industrial development and now calls forth largely defensive new ecological/green social movements. Recent technological developments in warfare threaten the life of masses of people and generate new defensive peace movements. Yet even these are not altogether new. World (colonialist/imperialist) capitalist development has caused (or been based on) severe environmental degradation in many parts of the third world before (as after the Conquest of the Americas, the slave wars and trade in Africa, the Rape of Bengal, etc) and has aroused defensive social movements. These included but were not confined to environmental issues, like North American Indian and Australian Aborigine movements again today. Of course, war has also decimated and threatened large populations before and has elicited defensive social movements from them as well. Foreshadowing our times, Euripides described a classical Greek women's/peace movement in his play

Lysistrata.

The 'classical' working class and labour-union movements can now be seen to be particular social movements, which have arisen and continue to arise in particular times and places. Capitalist industrialisation in the west gave rise to the industrial working class and to its grievances, which were expressed through working class and union(isation) movements. However, these movements have been defined and circumscribed by the particular circumstances of their place and time—in each region and sector during the period of industrialisation—and as a function of the deprivation and identity that it generated. 'Workers of the world unite' and 'proletarian revolution' have never been more than largely empty slogans. With the changing international division of labour, even the slogans have become meaningless; and working class and union movements are eroding in the west, while they are rising in those parts of the south and east where local industrialisation and global development are generating analogous conditions and grievances. Therefore, the mistakenly 'classical' working class social movements must be regarded as both recent and temporary, not to mention that they have always been local or regional and at best national- or state-oriented movements. We will examine their role in the demand for state power, when we discuss the latter below.

A new characteristic of many contemporary social movements, however, is that—beyond their spontaneous-appearing changeability and adaptability—they inherit organisational capacity and leadership from old labour movements, political parties, churches and other organisations, from which they draw leadership cadres who became disillusioned with the limitations of the old forms and who now seek to build new ones. This organisational input into the new social movements may be an important asset for them, compared to their historical, more amateurishly (dis)organised, forerunners but it may also contain the seeds of future institutionalisation of some contemporary movements.

What else may be new in the 'new' social movements is perhaps that they now tend to be more single class or stratum movements—middle class in the west and popular/working class in the south—than many of them were through the centuries. However, by that criterion of newness, the 'classical' old working class movements are also new and some contemporary ethnic, national and religious

movements are old, as we will observe when we discuss the class composition of social movements below.

Whether new or old, the 'new social movements' today are what most mobilises most people in pursuit of common concerns. Far more than 'classical' class movements, the social movements motivate and mobilise hundreds of millions of people in all parts of the world—mostly outside established political and social institutions that people find inadequate to serve their needs—which is why they have recourse to 'new' largely non-institutionalised social movements. This popular 'movement to social movements' is manifest even in identity-seeking and/or responsive social mobilisation or social movement with little or no membership ties: in youth (movement?) response to rock music around the world and football in Europe and elsewhere; in the millions of people in country after country who have spontaneously responded to visits by the Pope (beyond the Catholic Church as an institution); and in the massive spontaneous response to Bob Geldorf's extra- (political) institutional Band Aid, Live Aid, and Sport Aid appeals against hunger in Africa. The latter was an appeal and response not only to compassion, but also to a moral sense of the (in)justice of it all. Thus, some of these non-membership forms of social mobilisation have more in common with social movements than do some self-styled 'movements', like the Movimiento(s) de Izquierda Revolucionaria (MIR) in Bolivia, Chile, Peru and Venezuela, which are (or were) really 'Leninist' democratic-centralist political parties, or the Sandinista 'movement' in Nicaragua which formed a coalition of mass organisations, and all of which sought to capture and manage state power. This is not to mention the Non-Aligned Movement, which is a coalition of states or their governments in power and certainly not a social movement or a liberation movement of the peoples themselves.

(2) Social Movements Differ but Share Moral Motivation and Social Power

It may aid our examination of contemporary social movements to identify some ideal types and selected characteristics which emerge in (or from) their review below; although, of course, this exercise is rendered hazardous by the movements' variety and changeability. (We refer to 'ideal' types in the Weberian sense of an analytic distillation of characteristics not found in their pure form in the real world.) We may distinguish movements that are offensive (a minority) and defensive (the majority). On a related but different dimension, we can identify progressive, regressive, and escapist movements. A third dimension or characteristic seems to be the preponderance of women rather than men—and therefore apparently less hierarchicalisation in the movements' membership or leadership. A fourth dimension is that of

armed struggle, especially for state power, or unarmed and especially non-violent struggle, be it defensive or offensive. It can be no coincidence that the armed movements coincide with more hierarchical ones and the unarmed ones with movements in which women's participation is preponderant (even if women also participate in armed struggle).

Few movements are at once offensive, in the sense of seeking to change the established order, and progressive in the sense of seeking a better order for themselves or the world. Characteristically, these movements are largely led and/or peopled by women, notably of course the women's movement(s) itself/themselves. Most movements by far are defensive. Many seek to safeguard recent (sometimes progressive) achievements against reversal or encroachment. Examples are the student movements (which in 1986-87 reappeared in France, Spain, Mexico and China in masses not seen since 1967-68) and many thousands of third world community movements seeking to defend their members' livelihood against the encroachment of economic crisis and political repression. Some defensive movements seek to defend the environment or to maintain peace, or both (like the Greens in Germany). Other movements react defensively against modern encroachments by offering to regress to an (often largely mythical) golden age, like seventh century Islam. Many movements are escapist, or have important such components, in that they defensively/offensively seek millenarian salvation from the trials and tribulations of the real world, as in religious cults.

Varied as these social movements have been and are, if there are any characteristics they have in common, they are the following: that they share the force of morality and a sense of (in)justice in individual motivation, and the force of social mobilisation in developing social power. Individual membership or participation and motivation in all sorts of social movements contains a strong moral component and defensive concern with justice in the social or world order. Social movements then mobilise their members in an offensive/defensive against a shared moral sense of injustice, as analysed in Barrington Moore's "Injustice: The Social Bases of Obedience and Revolt". Morality and justice/injustice (perhaps more than the deprivation of livelihood and/or identity through exploitation and oppression through which morality and (in)justice manifest themselves), have probably been the essential motivating and driving force of social movements both past and present. However, this morality and concern with (in)justice refers largely to 'us', and the social group perceived as 'we' was and is very variable as between the following: family, tribe, village, ethnic group, nation, country, First, Second or Third World, humanity, etc, and gender, class, stratification, caste, race, and other groupings, or combinations of these. What mobilises us is this deprivation/oppression/injustice to 'us', however 'we' define

and perceive ourselves. Each social movement then serves to combat deprivation, but in so doing also to (re)affirm the identity of those active in the movement, and perhaps also the 'we' for whom the movement is active. Thus, such social movements, far from being new, have characterised human social life in many times and places.

At the same time, social movements generate and wield social power through the social mobilisation of their participants. This social power is at once generated by and derived from the social movement itself, rather than from any institution, political or otherwise. Indeed, institutionalisation weakens social movements and state political power negates them. Social movements require flexible, adaptive, and non-authoritarian organisation to direct social power in pursuit of social goals, which cannot be pursued only through random spontaneity. Such flexible organisation, however, need not imply institutionalisation, which confines and constricts the social movements' social power. Thus, the new self-organising social movements confront existing (state) political power through new social power, which modifies political power. The slogan of the women's movement that the personal is political applies a fortiori to social movements, which also redefine political power. As Luciana Castellina, a participant in many social movements (and some political parties) observes, 'we are a movement because we move—even political power.

(3) Social Movements are Cyclical

Social movements are cyclical in two senses. First, they respond to circumstances, which change as a result of political-economic and, perhaps, ideological fluctuations or cycles. Secondly, social movements tend to have life-cycles of their own. Social movements, their membership, mobilisation and strength, tend to be cyclical because the movements mobilise people in response to (mostly against, less for) circumstances, which are themselves cyclical.

There seem to be cultural/ideological, political/military, and economic/technological cycles, which affect social movements. There are also observers/participants who lend greater or even exclusive weight or determinant force to one or another of these social cycles. The name of Sorokin is associated with long ideological cycles, Modelski with political/war cycles, and Kondratieff and Schumpeter with economic and technological ones. Recently, Arthur J Schlesinger Jr, drawing in part on the work of his father, has described a 30-year political-ideological cycle in the United States of alternating progressive social-responsibility phases (of the Progressives in the 1910s, the New Deal in the 1930s, and the New Frontier/Great Society—civil rights and anti-Vietnam War movements in the 1960s) and individualist phases (of the Coolidge 1920s, the McCarthyist 1950s, and

the Reaganomic 1980s), which is to generate another progressive social movement phase in the 1990s. The renewed world economic crisis and technological invention of the last two decades has led scientific and popular attention to world-wide long economic/technological cycles—and to their possible relations to, or even determinant influence on, political and ideological cycles. Detailed examination thereof (and of the disputes about whether ideological, political or economic cycles are dominant) is beyond our scope here. However, to understand contemporary social movements, it is essential to view them in the cyclical context(s), which shape if not give rise to them. Moreover, it is not amiss to consider the possibility (we should argue the high probability) that there are political-economic cycles with ideological components and that we are now in a B phase downturn of a Kondratieff long wave or cycle, which importantly influences if not generates contemporary social movements (including those examined and predicted by Schlesinger).

The Kondratieff long cycle was in an upward phase at the beginning of this century, in a long downward 'crisis' interwar phase (where the two world wars belong in the cycle is also in dispute), a renewed post-war recovery, and again in a new downward 'crisis' phase beginning in the mid-1960s or more visibly since 1973. Social movements appear to have become more numerous and stronger in the last downward phase from 1873 to 1896 in the preceding century, during the war and interwar crisis period of this century, and again during the contemporary period of economic, political, social, cultural, ideological and other crisis. The historical evidence may be read to suggest that social movements decline in number and strength during economic upturns (although the 1960s witnessed many social movements in North and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia), and revive during the economic downturn. However, at the beginning they are largely defensive and often regressive and individualist (as in the past decade). Then, when the economic downturn most detrimentally affects people's livelihood and identity, the social movements become more offensive, progressive, and socially responsible. Schlesinger prognosticates this for the 1990s in the United States, and it is perhaps incipiently visible there already in the popularity of new protest rock music and the success of the stage play *Les Misérables* in 1987, etc. Of course, this 'movement to social movements' has already occurred in many community and communal movements in the third world in response to the spread of the world economic crisis there, which in Latin America and Africa is already deeper than the one of the 1930s.

Thus, much of the reason for and the determination of the present proliferation and strength of social movements must be sought in their cyclical historical context, even though many of their members regard

themselves as moving autonomously in pursuit of timeless and sometimes universal seeming ideals, like the true religion, the essential nation, or the real community. The development of the present world political-economic crisis and its multiple ramifications in different parts of the world is generating or aggravating (feelings of) economic, political, cultural and identity deprivation and is a moral affront to their sense of justice for hundreds of millions of people around the world.

In particular, the world economic crisis has reduced the efficacy of, and popular confidence in, the nation state and its customary political institutions as defenders and promoters of the people's interests. In the West, the Social-Democratic welfare state is threatened by economic bankruptcy and political paralysis, especially in the face of world economic forces beyond its control. In the South, the state is subject to domestic militarisation and authoritarianism and to foreign economic dependence and weakness. In the East, the state is perceived as politically oppressive (as in the South) but economically impotent (as there and in the West) and socially corrupt, and therefore also not an attractive model for emulation elsewhere. Hardly anywhere, then, during this crisis, is 'state power' an adequate desideratum or instrument for the satisfaction of popular needs. Therefore, people everywhere—albeit different people in different ways—seek advancement, or at least protection and affirmation, or at least freedom, through a myriad of non-state social movements, which thereby seek to reorganise social and redefine political life.

In many cases, particularly among middle-class people, newly deteriorating circumstances contradict their previously rising aspirations and expectations. More and more people feel increasingly powerless themselves and/or see that their hallowed political, social and cultural institutions are less and less able to protect and support them. Therefore, and in part paradoxically, they seek renewed or greater empowerment through social movements, which are mostly defensive of livelihood and/or identity (like rural and urban local-community, ethnic/nationalist and some religious movements), or often escapist (like the mushrooming religious cult and spiritualist and some fundamentalist movements). Ecological, peace, and women's movements—separately or in combination also with the other social movements—also seem to respond to the same crisis-generated deprivation and powerlessness, which they mostly seek defensively to stem or redress. Only marginally are these movements offensively in pursuit of betterment, like the women's movement, which seeks to improve women's position in, and society itself, albeit at a time when the economic crisis is undermining women's economic opportunities.

As social movements come and grow cyclically in response to changing circumstances, so do they go again. Of course, if

the demands of a particular social movement are met, it tends to lose force as its *raison d'être* disappears (or it is institutionalised and ceases to be a social movement). More usually, however, the circumstances themselves change (only in part if at all thanks to the social movement itself) and the movement loses its appeal and force through irrelevance or it is transformed (or its members move to) another movement with new demands. Moreover, as movements that mobilise people rather than institutionalising action, even when they are unsuccessful or still relevant to existing circumstances, social movements tend to loose their force as their capacity to mobilise wanes. This susceptibility to aging and death is particularly true of social movements that are dependent on a charismatic leader to mobilise its members. The various 1968 movements, and most revolutionary and peasant movements, are dramatic examples of the cyclical life-cycle of social movements.

Of course, history also has long-term cumulative trends as well as cycles. However, the cumulative historical trends seem not to have been generated primarily by social movements. Some major social movements may nonetheless have contributed to these trends. Examples may be past major religious movements, like Christianity, Islam or the Reformation. Political movements like the French, Soviet and Chinese revolutions are widely regarded as having changed the world for all future time. Yet it is equally arguable that they had no cumulative effect on the world as a whole, and that they have been subject to considerable reversal even at home. As we will argue below, 'real existing socialism' does not now appear to be an irreversible, cumulative long-term trend as its proponents claimed and some still think. Most social movements by far, however, leave little permanent and cumulative mark on history. Moreover, probably no social movement has ever achieved all of or precisely what its participants (who frequently had differing and sometimes conflicting aims) proposed. Indeed, many if not all social movements in the past brought about rather different consequences from those that they intended.

(4) *Class Composition of Social Movements*

The new social movements in the West are predominantly middle-class based. This class composition of the social movements, of course, in the first instance reflects the changing stratification of Western society from more to less bi-polar forms. The relative and now often absolute reduction of the industrial labour force, like the agricultural one before it, and the growth of tertiary service sector employment (ever if much of it is low-waged) and self-employment have increased the relative and absolute pool of middle-class people. The decline in industrial working-class employment has reduced not only the size of this

social sector but also its organisational strength, militancy and consciousness in 'classical' working-class and labour-union movements. The grievances about ecology, peace, women's rights, community organisation, and identity (including ethnicity and minority nationalism), seem to be felt and related to demands for justice predominantly among the middle classes in the West. However, ethnic, national, and some religious movements straddle class and social strata more. In particular, minority movements, such as the Black civil rights and the Latin Chicano movements in the United States, do have a substantial popular base, though much of the leadership and many of their successful demands come from the middle class. Only nationalist chauvinism and perhaps fundamentalist religiosity (but not religious cultism and spiritualism) seem to mobilise working-class and some minority people more massively than their often nonetheless middle-class leadership. Although most of these people's grievances may be largely economically based (through increased deprivation, or reduced or even inverted social mobility), they are mostly expressed through allegiance to social movements, which pursue feminist, ecological, peace, community, ethnic/nationalist and ideological demands.

In the third world, social movements are predominantly popular/working class. Not only does this class/stratum have more weight in the Third World, but its members are much more absolutely and relatively subject to deprivation and (felt) injustice, which mobilises them in and through social movements. Moreover, the international and national/domestic burden of the present world economic crisis falls so heavily on these already low-income people as to pose serious threats to their physical and economic survival and cultural identity. Therefore, they *must* mobilise to defend themselves—through social movements—in the absence of the availability or possibility of existing social and political institutions to defend them. These Third World social movements are at once co-operative and competitive or conflictive. Among the most numerous, active and popular of these social movements are a myriad of apparently spontaneous local rural and urban organisations/movements, which seek to defend their members' survival through co-operative consumption, distributions, and also production. Examples, are soup kitchens; distributors and often producers of basic necessities, like bread; organisers, petitioners or negotiators, and sometimes fighters for community infrastructure, like agricultural and urban land, water, electricity, transport, etc. Recently there were over 1,500 such local community/movements in Rio de Janeiro alone; and they are increasingly widespread and active in India's 6,00,000 villages.

In other words, 'the class struggle' in much of the Third World continues and even intensifies; but it takes—or expresses itself through—many social-movement forms as

well as the 'classical' labour (union) vs capital and 'its' state one. These popular social movements and organisations are other instruments and expressions of people's struggle against exploitation and oppression and for survival and identity in a complex dependent society, in which these movements are attempts at and instruments of democratic self-empowerment of the people. In the Third World, region, locality, residence, occupation, stratification, race, colour, ethnicity, language, religion, etc, individually and in complex combination, are elements and instruments of domination and liberation. Social movements and the 'class struggle' they express must inevitably also reflect this complex economic, political, social, cultural structure and process.

However, not unlike working-class and peasant movements before, these popular movements often have some middle-class leadership and now ironically offer some opportunities for employment and job satisfaction to otherwise unemployable middle-class and intelligentia professionals, teachers, priests, etc, who offer their services as leaders, organisers or advisors to these community and other popular Third World social movements.

More often than not, these local community movements overlap with religious and ethnic movements, which lend them strength and promote the defence and assertion of people's identity. However, ethnic, national and religious movements also straddle class membership more in the Third World. Ethnic, religious and other 'communal' movements in South Asia (Hindu, Moslem, Sikh, Tamil, Assamese and many others) and elsewhere in the third world—perhaps most dramatically and tragically in Lebanon—also mobilise peoples against each other, however. The more serious the economic crisis, and the political crisis of state and party to manage it, and the greater the deception of previous aspirations and expectations, the more serious and conflictive are these communal, sometimes racial, and also community movements likely to grow in the popular demand for identity in many parts of the Third World.

The (so-called) Socialist East is by no means exempt from this world-wide movement to social movements. The ten million mobilised by Solidarity in Poland and various movements in China are well known examples, but other parts of Eastern Europe and even the Soviet Union are increasingly visited by similar movements. However, corresponding to the Socialist East's intermediary or overlapping position between the industrial capitalist West and the Third World South (if these categories still have any utility or meaning, which is increasingly doubtful), the social movements in the Socialist East also seem to straddle or combine class/strata membership more than in the West or the South. Ethnic, nationalist, religious, ecological, peace, women's, regional/community and (other) protest movements with varied social membership

are on the rise both within and outside of the institutional and political structure throughout the socialist countries for reasons, and in response to changing circumstances, similar to those in the rest of the world.

(5) Social Movements and State Power

Most social movements do not seek state power, but autonomy, also from the state itself. For many participants and observers, this statement is a truism since *not* seeking—let alone wielding—state power is a *sine qua non* of a social movement, and state power would negate the very essence and purpose of most social movements. This incompatibility between social movement and state power is perhaps most intuitively obvious for the women's movement(s). On the other hand, for both participants and observers of social movements, it is hardly satisfactory to define or even describe them in terms of what they are not, instead of what they are. The most numerous—because individually small-scale—social movements, which are community based, of course cannot seek state power. However, similarly to the women's movement, the very notion of state or even political party power for them would negate most of their grassroots aims and essence. These community movements mobilise and organise their members in pursuit of material and non-material ends, which they often regard unjustly denied to them by the state and its institutions, including political parties. Among the non-material aims and methods of many local community movements is more grassroots participatory democracy and bottom-up self-determination. These are sensed as being denied to them by the state and its political system. Therefore, the community movements seek either to carve out greater self-determination for themselves within the state or to bypass the state altogether. These community movements have recently mushroomed all over the South and West, although perhaps less so in the East. Of necessity, in the South the community movements are more concerned with material needs—and often survival itself—while in the West many can afford to devote greater attention to local grassroots participatory democracy. Of course, the for them uncontrollable forces of the national and world economy severely limit the community movements' room for manoeuvre. Not even national states have sufficient power—and do not protect the communities—in the face of world economic forces beyond their control. That is why—perhaps ironically since they are even more powerless—the local communities attempt protection on a self-empowering do-it-yourself basis. Collective action and direction are consciously pursued and safeguarded, and concentration of power is shunned as corrupting (as though speaking Actonian prose).

The other side of this same coin is—

especially during the economic crisis—the increasing disappointment and frustration of many people with the economy itself. ‘Economic growth’, ‘economic development’, ‘economic ends’, ‘economic means’, ‘economic necessities’, ‘economic austerity’—so many economic slogans and ‘solutions’—and they do not satisfy people’s needs for community, identity, spirituality, or often even material welfare. Moreover, political (state) institutions are perceived as handmaidens rather than alternatives or even satisfactory directors of these supposed economic imperatives. No wonder that particularly women, who suffer the most at the hands of the economy, are in the forefront of non- and anti-economic extra-institutional social movements, which offer or seek other solutions and rewards.

Many social movements also respond to people’s frustration with, and sense of injustice towards, political-economic forces beyond their control. Many of these economic forces—some(times) perceived, some(times) not—emanate from the world economy in crisis. Significantly, people increasingly regard the state, and its institutions, particularly political parties, as ineffective in face of these powerful forces. Either the state and its political process cannot or it will not face up to, let alone control, these economic forces. In either case, the state and its institutions, as well as the political process and political parties where they exist, leave people at the mercy of forces to which they have to respond by other means—through their own social movements. Accordingly, people form or join largely protective and defensive social movements on the basis of religious, ethnic, national, race, gender, ecological, peace, as well as community and various ‘single’ issues. Most of these movements mobilise and organise themselves independently from the state, its institutions and political parties. They do not regard the state or its institutions, and particularly membership or militancy in political parties, as adequate or appropriate institutions for the pursuit of their aims. Indeed, much of the membership and force of contemporary social movements is the reflection of people’s disappointment and frustration with—and their search for alternatives to—the political process, political parties, the state, and the capture of state power in the West, South and East. The perceived failure of revolutionary, as well as reformist, left-wing parties and regimes, in all parts of the world, adequately to express people’s protest and to offer viable and satisfying alternatives, has been responsible for much of the popular movement to social movements. However, in many cases people’s grievances are against the state and its institutions; and in some cases social movements seek to influence state action through mostly outside—much more rarely inside—pressure. Only some ethnic and nationalist, and in the Islamic world some religious, movements seek a state of their own.

One of the major problems of and with

social movements, nonetheless, is their co-existence with national states, their political institutions, process and parties. An illustration of this problem is the Green Movement/Party in Germany. The originally grassroots ecological movement became a political party in parliament. The ‘Realo’ (realist, realpolitik) wing argues that the state, parliament, political parties, etc. are a fact of life, which the movement must take account of and use to its advantage, and that influence is best exerted by entering these institutions and co-operating with others from the inside. The ‘Fund’ (fundamentalist) wing argues that participation in state institutions and coalitions with other political parties like the Social Democrats compromises the Greens’ aims and prostitutes their fundamentals, including that of being a movement. Ethnic, national, religious, and some peace and community movements, face similar problems. Whatever they can do outside the state, the pressure sometimes becomes irresistible also to try to act within the state, as or as part of, or through, a political party or other state institution. But then the movement(s) run the danger of compromising their mission, demobilising or repelling their membership, and negating themselves as movements. The question arises, whether the end justifies the means and is more achievable through other more institutionalised non-movement means. Moreover, the question arises whether old social movements which were often created as mass front organisations of political parties are now replaced by new social movements, which themselves form or join political parties. But in that case, what difference remains between the old and the new social movements, and what happens to the non-/extra-/anti-state and party sentiments and mobilisation of many movement members? Perhaps the answer must be sought by shifting the question to the examination of the life-cycle of social movements and the replacement of old new movements by new movements.

(6) *Social Movements and Social Transformation*

Social movements are important agents of social transformation and new vision, despite their above-mentioned defensiveness, limitations and relations to the state. One reason for the importance of social movements, of course, is the void they fill where the state and other social and cultural institutions are unable or unwilling to act in the interests of their members. Indeed, as we have observed above, social movements step in where institutions do not exist, or where they fail to serve, or violate and contradict, people’s interests. Often, social movements step in where angels fear to tread. Although many social movements, and particularly religious ones, invoke the sanctity of traditional ways and values, other social movements are socially, culturally and otherwise innovative. Nonetheless, if the circumstances

that give rise to and support a social movement disappear, so does the movement. If the movement achieves its aims or they become irrelevant, it loses its appeal. It loses steam and fades away, or it becomes petrified.

Much social transformation, cultural change and economic development, however, occurs as the result of institutions, forces, relations, etc. that are not social movements, nor the political process in national states. World economic development, industrialisation, technological change, social and cultural ‘modernisation’, etc. were and are processes, which are hardly driven or directed by social movements or political (state) institutions. Their intervention has been more reactive than promotive. Although state intervention should not be underestimated (as it is by the free marketeers), its limitations are ever greater in a world economy whose cycles and trends are largely beyond control. Even ‘socialist’ state ownership and planning is now unable to direct or even to cope with the forces of the world economy.

This circumstance should make for more realism and modesty about the prospects of social movements (or for that matter of political institutions) and their policies to counteract or even modify, let alone to escape from, these world economic forces—but they do not. On the contrary, the more powerful and uncontrollable the forces of the world economy, especially in the present period of world economic crisis, the more do they generate social movements (and some political and ideological policies), which claim both autonomy and immunity from these world economic forces and which promise to overcome them or to isolate their members from them. Much of the attraction of many social movements, of course, comes precisely from the moral force of their promise to free their participants from the deeply felt unjust (threat of) deprivation of material necessities, social status, and cultural identity. Therefore, objectively irrational hopes of salvation appear as subjectively rational appeals to confront reality—and to serve oneself and one’s soul through active participation in social movements. The message becomes the medium, to invert Marshall McLuhan.

The reference in this context to ‘anti-systemic’ (social) movements, for instance by Amin and Wallerstein, requires clarification, however. Many social movements are indeed *antisystemic* in the sense that the movements and their participants combat or otherwise challenge the system or some aspect thereof. However, very few social movements are *antisystemic* in their attempt, and still less in their success, to destroy the system and to replace it by another one or none at all. There is overwhelming historical evidence that the social movements are *not antisystemic* in this sense. As we observed above, the social consequences of social movements themselves are scarcely cumulative. Moreover their effects are often unintended, so that

not infrequently these effects are incorporated—if not co-opted—by the system, which ends up being invigorated and reinforced by social movements, which were antisystemic but did not turn out to be antisystemic. There is scarce contemporary evidence that in the future the prospects for social movements and their consequences will be very different from the past. Indeed, the systemic means, ends, and consequences of social movements—even if some are subsequently co-opted—are to modify the system 'only' by changing its systemic linkages.

(7) *Delinking and Transition to Socialism in Social Movements*

Social movements today and tomorrow may be regarded as offering new interpretations and solutions to the problematics of 'delinking' from capitalism and 'transition to socialism'. Southern dependent national state delinking from the world capitalist economy and its cycles proved to be impossible during the post-war period of expansion. Eastern socialist states and their planned economies have been relinked to the world economy, and both its cycles and its technological development, during the present crisis in the world economy. No national economy or its state, and hardly any political parties anywhere in the world today, seriously regard delinking a national economy to be a serious practical proposition. Therefore, the thesis about delinking—'Stop the World, I Want to Get Off!'—is in for an agonising reappraisal from those (like one of the present writers) who have sustained this as an option and a necessity. However, if the national state and economy are not and cannot be independent today or in the foreseeable future, perhaps the idea of 'delinking' can and should be reinterpreted rather than abandoned altogether.

The problematique of 'delinking' may be reinterpreted through the different/new links, which many social movements are trying to forge, both between their members and society and within society itself. The women's movement and some green ones are examples. Many social movements seek to protect their members physically or spiritually from the vagaries of the cyclical world economy and propose different kinds of links for their members to the economy and society, which they also propose to help change. Perhaps 'delinking' should be amended to read 'different linking' or 'changed links'. In that case, it is the social movements, which are changing some links into different ones for their members today. This would include those religious and spiritualist movements, which claim to offer isolation and protection from the traumas of the secular world to their true believers, and some (especially minority ethnic ones), which seek to affirm identity among members and different links with the society around them.

Similarly, the problematique and pro-

spects of transition to socialism may be reinterpreted in view of the experience with 'really existing socialism' and contemporary social movements. 'Really existing socialism' has proven unable to delink from the world capitalist economy. Moreover, despite its achievement in promoting extensive growth (by mobilising human and physical resources), it has failed to provide adequately for intensive growth through technological development. Indeed, the same state planning which was an asset for absolute industrial autarchic national growth has proven to be a liability for competitive technological development in a rapidly changing world economy. The related political organisation of 'really existing socialism' has lost its efficacy at home and its attraction abroad. Most importantly perhaps, it is becoming increasingly clear that the road to a better 'socialist' future replacement of the present capitalist world economy does not lead via, 'really existing socialism'. As the Polish planner Josef Pajestka observed at a recent meeting at the Central School of Planning and Statistics in Warsaw, 'really existing socialism' is stuck on a side track. The world, as one of the present authors remarked, is rushing by in the express train on the main track, even though, as Pajestka retorted, it may be heading for an abyss.

Indeed, the utopian socialists—whom Marx condemned as utopian instead of scientific—may turn out to have been much less utopian than the supposedly scientific socialists, whose vision has turned out much more utopian than realistic. In seeking and organising to change society in smaller, immediate but realisable steps, which did not require state power, the utopian socialists were perhaps more realistic than the scientific ones—and they were more akin then to the social movements of our time than the 'scientific' socialists of the intervening century. What is more, many utopian socialists proposed and pursued social changes and particularly different gender relations, which were subsequently abandoned or forgotten by scientific socialists. In "Eve and the New Jerusalem", Barbara Taylor documents the struggle and where possible the implementation of women's rights and of participatory democracy by the (Robert) Owenite utopian socialists, and the importance of the same as well among those associated with Fourier and Saint-Simon. Participation was also present in the early Marx as an antidote to the alienation which concerned him and, again, many social movements today. Thus, some contemporary social movements might benefit from greater familiarity with the goals, organisation, and experience of earlier utopian socialists—and of some anarchists as well.

The real transition to a 'socialist' alternative to the present world economy, society and polity, therefore, may be much more in the hands of the social movements. Not only must they intervene for the sake of survival

to save as many people as possible from any threatening abyss. We must also look to the social movements as the most active agents to forge new links, which can transform the world in new directions. Moreover, although some social movements are sub-national, few are national or inter-national (in the sense of being between nation states), and many, like the women's, peace and ecological movements could be *trans*-national (that is *non*-national) or people-to-people within the world system. Not surprisingly perhaps, there is more transnationality among metropolitan-based social movements than among the more fragmented ones in the also more fragmented dependent Third World. This real social(ist) transformation—if any—under the agency of the social movements will, however, be more supple and multifarious than any illusory 'socialism in one country' repeated again and again.

(8) *Coalitions and Conflict among Social Movements*

It may be useful—without seeking to give any advice—to inquire into likely possibilities of conflict and overlap or coalitions among different (kinds of) social movements. Euripides already remarked on the relation between women and peace in *Lysistrata*. Riane Eisler has traced this same relation even farther back in human society in her *The Chalice and the Blade*. Today, the women's and peace movements share membership and leadership and certainly offer opportunities for coalition. Substantial participant or membership and leadership overlap can also be observed between women's movements and local community movements. At least women are especially—and in Latin America preponderantly—active in community movements, where they acquire some feminist perspectives and press their own demands, which serve to modify these movements, their communities, and hopefully society. In the West, there is a similar if lesser overlap between community and peace movements, also with marked woman leadership, which expresses itself in 'nuclear-free' communities for instance. Again, environmental/ecological/green movements in the West share compatible goals and membership with women's peace and community movements. Therefore, these women's peace, environmental, and community movements—all of which shy away from pursuit of state power and most entanglements with political institutions—offer widespread opportunities for coalitions among social movements. Moreover, thanks to their preponderance of women, they also manifest more communal, participatory, democratic, mutual support, and networking instead of hierarchical relations among their participants and offer hope for their greater spread through society.

Other areas of overlap, shared membership, and compatibility or coalition may be observed among some religious and ethnic/national and sometimes racial

movements. The movement led by the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran and some of his followers elsewhere in the Islamic world is the most spectacular example, which has the most massive and successful mobilisation of recent times to its credit. The Sikhs in Punjab, the Tamils in Sri Lanka, perhaps Solidarity in Poland, Albanians in Yugoslav Kosovo, and Irish Catholics in Northern Ireland, are other recent examples. Notably, however, these religious-ethnic-nationalist movements also seek state power or institutional autonomy and sometimes incorporation within a neighbouring ethnic/national state. If communities are religiously and ethnically homogeneous, there may be overlap or coalition with these larger movements.

Opportunities for compatibility or coalition among different social movements are enhanced and may be found when they have common participants/membership and/or common enemies. The common membership of women in general in various different social movements has already been noted above. However, common membership also extends to individuals and particularly to individual women, who dedicate active participation to various social movements at the same time and/or successively. These people are in key positions to forge links, if not coalitions, among otherwise different social movements. Such links can also emerge from the identification of one or more common enemies like a particular state, government or tyrant; a certain dominant institution or social, racial or ethnic group; or even less concretely identifiable enemies like 'the West', 'imperialism', 'capital', 'the state', 'foreigners', 'men', 'authority', or 'hierarchy'. Moreover, both the opportunities for coalition and the massiveness and strength of social mobilisation are probably enhanced when people perceive that they must *defend* themselves against these enemies.

There are also significant areas of conflict and competition among social movements. Of course, movements of different religions and ethnicities or races conflict and compete with each other. However, all of them also seem to conflict and compete with the women's movement(s) and often with the peace movement. In particular, virtually all religious, ethnic and national(ist) movements—like working class and Marxist-oriented movements and political parties as well—negate and sacrifice women's interests. Moreover, they successfully compete with women's movements if any, which lose ground they may already have gained to the onslaught of religious, ethnic and nationalist movements. Religion and nationalism, and even more so the two combined, seem to sacrifice women's interests and movements. Shiite Iran deliberately increases women's oppression. In Vietnam, Nicaragua and elsewhere, women first participated actively in and benefited from nationalist struggle, but subsequently also saw further advances of their interests sacrificed to the priority of

'the national interest', and in Nicaragua also to Catholic support. Similarly, nationalist and national liberation movements in many parts of Asia and Africa tend to overlook and neglect, or even to suppress and combat, minority ethnic and other movements and their interests.

Often, social movements also have serious internal conflicts of ends and/or means. Of course, when social movements are coalitions, especially for temporary tactical purposes, the participants may have different and sometimes conflicting ends and/or preferences among means. These have been common, for instance, among anti-imperialist national liberation and socialist movements in the Third World. The combination of religious with other social movements, such as those with significant elements of liberation theology, also contain the potential for internal conflict. Indeed, most religious or strongly religiously-oriented movements seem to contain important seeds of internal conflict between progressive and regressive, and sometimes also escapist, aims. Appeal to religion, not to mention a church, may be the main or even the only recourse for people to mobilise against a repressive regime or to overcome oppressive and/or alienating circumstances. In this sense, religion offers a liberating progressive option, like liberation theology and church-related community movements in Latin America, the Polish Catholic Church, the movement against the Shah in Iran, and some ethnic/religious communal (defence) movements in Asia. However, the *same* religion and church also contain important regressive and reactionary elements. Regressive or even escapist elements are the offer to bring back the golden age of seventh century Islam or even to eliminate all traces of westernisation. Literally reactionary are the Islamic and Catholic attempts to turn back or prevent the further development of progressive developments in gender relations, including divorce, birth-control and socio-economic opportunities for women, and other civil rights and liberties. Indeed, religion is more often an instrument of reactionary than of progressive forces in the West, East and South.

(9) *The Impropriety of 'Good' Outside Advice to Social Movements*

As long as the social movements have to write their own scripts as they go along, they cannot use and can only reject as counter-productive, any prescriptions from on high or outside as to where they should go or how they should get there. In particular, the social movements cannot use the kind of imaginary blueprints for the future which Smith and Marx avoided but which have been so popular among many of those who claim to speak in their name. For this reason also, good advice from intellectuals and other well-meaning people is both hard to find and hard to assimilate for the social movements. Most inappropriate perhaps is supposed counsel from non-participant observers (like us?). On the other hand, many social movements can and do benefit from the vision and organisational 'skill inputs' by participants and more rarely from transient outsiders, who transfer some vision and/or experience from other movements, parties, and institutions. Many community movements, especially, also benefit from or even depend on the support of outside institutions, such as the church, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and occasionally even the state. Such aid, and especially dependence, also involves dangers of co-optation by these institutions of individual leaders or intermediaries, the leadership and its goals, or even the social movement itself. Nonetheless, what most characterises social movements is that they (must) do their own thing in their own way. In fact, perhaps the most important thing that social movements have to offer both to their participants/members and to others in the world is their own participatory self-transforming trial-and-error approach and adaptability. Herein is the hope they promise for the future.

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